

Women's Language Features on The Upper Class Female Characters of The Great Gatsby Movie

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Abstract This study is entitled Women's Language Features on The Upper Class Female Characters of The Great Gatsby Movie. There are two aims of this study: identifying the type of women's language features on the upper class female characters of The Great Gatsby and the sociological function that influenced the characters to use the feature. The data were taken from a movie entitled The Great Gatsby that was released in 2013. There are three characters whose utterances were analysed in this movie: Daisy, Jordan, and Daisy's mother. The data was gathered from the movie by watching the movie through an online movie streaming service and reading the script. Qualitative research method was used to collect the data. Then the data was analysed mainly with women's language theory by Robin Lakoff and supported with other theories and opinions from numerous experts in this field. There are seven out of ten women's language features found in the female characters's utterances of this movie. The features are lexical hedges, empty adjectives, tag question, intensifier, avoidance of swear words, rising intonation on declaratives and emotional emphasis. There is also an analysis on how their social class may have been the influence in the amount of women's language features they used in their utterances.

Keywords: women's language, upper class, social class. sociological function.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication method used by people in the world as a way to convey knowledge and emotion to others in their everyday lives. Language is also an active and complex system that shows us the meaning of social categories. The scientific study of a language is called linguistic. One of linguistic subfields is sociolinguistic. Sociolinguistic is a derivation of two words: sociology and linguistic (Mu'in, 2019). Sociolinguistic concerned with the different forms of linguistic variation used to convey and reflect social factors. Sociolinguistic also concerned with how language and gender are related within our society. It showed us the fact that gender and language difference have a profound social root. We can see the different patterns of language and gender difference from a viewpoint of social structure, rights, and continuity (Dong, 2014). Formation of language difference was influenced by the unequal gender position of men and women that derived from thousand years ago. It influenced women to soften their language as they are considered to be weak, limited to the domestic role, and have to

lessen their power in order to be more acceptable by the society.

Women also experience discrimination in the way they have to choose their language. Even after several women liberation movement happened in our society over the period of times, there are limitation for women on how they supposed to behave. Women are required to choose their best language and act a certain way in order to be deemed as presentable. Word choices, etiquettes, and the tone of women's voice are all influenced by the social constraints (Flah, 2011). There is no exception for women to avoid the constraint especially for women in the higher status.

The era of 1920s saw a major division in social status because of socio-economic classes. One family was wealthy enough to afford fancy cars and mansion and the other lived in poverty as a result of the sudden socio-economic boom in the 1920s. The main factors of America's economic boom in the 1920s were technological advancements that mainly led to mass production of goods, ultimately attracted a large number of consumers across the country (BBC, 2021) The 1920s was also dubbed as the

“New Woman” era that marks the growing emphasis on consumption and also established national ethos of materialism (Locke and Wright, 2019). Women undergone a significant cultural change in the 1920s that impacted the way they lived for a long time. The change gave more opportunities for women to work outside of their home. While the number of working women increased during the era, limitation still existed for women in upper and lower social class. But, before all of this, the United States had already considered to be a massive industrial powerhouse and wealthy women in the upper class of society already had their privileges. They were labelled in the society as the Old Money. People who are considered as the Old Money are the one whose families have inherited their wealth from generation to generation. Their wealth came from abundant natural resources, which included minerals, coals, and land (Hornby and Crowther, 1995).

Despite being in a wealthy family, there are many constraints that women faced to keep their family's name clean. Limitation of expression was put in order to preserve their dignity. Because of the limitation, there are specific characteristics that women use in their daily conversation. This is in line with the statement by Pan, (2011) that “female language, whether spoken or written language has its own unique characteristics (p 1015). This statement implied that women's language is a language used by women that has its own distinct traits compared to the opposite gender. The use of women's language can diminish the personal identity of a woman by denying her opportunity to express herself strongly and limiting her right to be treated as a serious person (Lakoff, 1975). There are ten women's language features that was cited from Lakoff's book (Holmes, 2013). The features are lexical hedges or fillers, tag question, rising intonation, empty adjectives, precise colour terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress.

Based on the background given above, this study tried to (a) identify what type of women's language features was found on the female characters of *The Great Gatsby* (b) analyze the sociological function of women's language features in *The Great Gatsby* movie.

II. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The research method that is used for this study consisted of data source, method and technique of collecting data, method and technique of analyzing data, and method and technique of presenting data.

Data Source

The data source of this study is taking the form of movie and the movie script. The data is a movie with the title “*The Great Gatsby*”. *The Great Gatsby* was directed by Baz Luhrmann and was released in 2013. This movie was the fourth film adaptation of a 1925 novel by F.Scott Fitzgerald of the same name. It told the story of Nick Carraway and his mysteriously wealthy neighbor Jay Gatsby during the peak of Roaring Twenties in New York.

The name of the female characters in the movie that were analyzed for this study are Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Daisy's mother. Daisy Buchanan, who originally was born into the highly-regarded family in Louisville, is the wife of the wealthy Tom Buchanan. It was later revealed in the movie that Buchanan was the former lover of Jay Gatsby during their younger year. Jordan Baker is a longtime close friend of Daisy, professional golfer, and well-known sport star. With her reputation, Jordan is considered highly within the upper crust of the society and often hangout with people from the same social class. Daisy's Mother came from an upper-class and dignified family who loved to host parties for military officers stationed near their family home.

This movie was chosen because it gave deep insight on how their identity of women and the social situation that surrounded them affect the language they use. This movie was also chosen because the female characters represented the situation of women in the 1920s that many women faces even until today. Women rejected the constraint of women that was placed to them during the Victorian era (Locke & Wright, 2019). The new morality helped women to gain more access to independence, but there are still certain limitations for women.

Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The data for this study will be collected using documentation method. With this method, the technique that will be applied is note-taking. The steps of collecting data are as follows: firstly, watching *The Great Gatsby* on an online streaming service called Netflix. Second, writing down the words uttered by the three female main characters of *The Great Gatsby* that can be considered using women's language features. Third step is comparing the noted words with the movie script. The next step is classifying the noted utterances into each women's language features. Last, eliminating certain datas that can be considered identical in order for a manageable and sharper analysis.

Method and Technique of Analysing Data

This research used qualitative research method as the technique to analyze the data. Qualitative research method is a scientific

observation method for the collection of non-numeric data. First, a close attention was paid in each dialogues where female main characters of the movie that possibly contain women language features by Lakoff (1975). Then, the context of the dialogue was given to help the reader understand the scene of the movie. Last, an analysis was done on the functions of the utterances that contained the women's language features.

Method and Technique of Presenting Data

Narrative method and informal technique were used to present the analyzed data in this study. Narrative method is the study of stories, narratives, or descriptions of a series of events (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This method is something that all literature researchers do in common. The technique that was used for this study is informal technique. Informal technique usually provides more comprehensible analysis of a data without applying any mathematical calculations, statistics, and charts (Kothari, 2008).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Analysis of Women's Language Features

a. Lexical Hedges or Fillers

Daisy : "Oh Nicky."

Nick : "What?"

Daisy : "*It's just,well,you see*, I think everything's terrible anyhow.

Nick : "Really?"

Daisy : "Yes. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything, and I've had very bad time Nicky. I'm pretty cynical about everything"

After having dinner together, Daisy and Nick took a walk at the garden away from the ears of her husband and the servants. During the walk, Daisy expressed her frustration surrounding Tom's affair and her marital problems with Tom. Lexical hedges can be used to express the uncertainty in their utterance (Holmes, 2013). Through the use of "*It's just,well,you see*", Daisy seemed to have difficulty to express her hardships. She used lexical hedges to give herself some moments to think of the next words she would uttered. As a woman from the upper class, Daisy had to refrain herself from exposing too much of her private life.

b. Tag Question

Jordan : "Tom's got some women in New York."

Nick : "Got some women?"

Jordan : "She might have the decency not to telephone at dinner time...*Don't you think?*"

Daisy, Tom, Jordan, and Nick were having their dinner together and suddenly there was a call for Tom. It turned out that the call came from Tom's mistress and Daisy was deeply embarrassed by it. Nick and Jordan were left alone at the dinner table as Tom and Daisy had an argument away from them. As Nick tried to break the ice and have conversation with Jordan, Jordan immediately shushed him out. She wanted to hear their conversation especially if it is related about Tom's mistress who lived in New York. It can be said that Jordan used tag question for her utterance here. Lakoff (1975) stated that tag question is used "when the speaker is stating a claim, but lacks full confidence in the truth of that claim" (p.54). Although the use of "*Don't you think*" as tag question is uncommon, by putting it at the end of conversation signified that Jordan respectfully wanted Nick to agree that the mistress shouldn't dare to contact Tom especially during dinner time.

c. Empty Adjectives

Daisy : "Is that you, *my lovely*?"

Nick (V.O): " Daisy Buchanan. The golden girl. A breathless warmth flowed from her. A promise that there was no one else in the world she wanted to see."

Daisy : "Do they miss me in Chicago?"

Nick : "Oh yes. At least a dozen of people sent their loves."

During the summer of 1922, Nick went to West Egg after being invited for a meal by his cousin Daisy, and husband Tom Buchanan. Tom is also Nick's classmate during their time as student in Yale. He was first welcomed by Tom and have a little conversation reminiscing over their time at Yale. As they entered the living room, Daisy rose from the couch and happily greeted his cousin whom she hasn't met for a long time. Daisy spoke with soft and refined voice, befitting of her role of the wife of a wealthy family. This sentence is classified using empty adjectives. Lovely is considered one of the adjectives that solely limited to be used by women (Lakoff, 1975). The word "lovely" means that someone, usually a girl or woman, that are very appealing to the eye (Hornby & Crowther, 1995). In British English, the word was used to describe a company that gives you a big pleasure. Daisy called Nick with "*My Lovely*" to add a friendly element when she welcomed her cousin into her home.

d. Emotional Emphasis

Jordan : "I've just heard *the most shocking* thing; it all makes sense..."

Teddy : "Where have you been? The car is waiting."

Jordan : “Simply *amazing*, Nick! It all makes sense.”

Nick and Jordan cozied up to each other during the annual weekly party held at Gatsby’s mansion. Suddenly, Herzog, who is Gatsby’s personal servant, told Jordan that his boss wished to speak with her alone. Shocked by the request, she then left Nick to talk with Gatsby on the second floor of the mansion. After the talk, she went down the stairs and saw Nick on the way out of the mansion. She rushed up to him to express the shocking news she just heard. She tried to tell him the message, but she swore not to tell Nick yet and was rushed out of the door by Teddy to go home as the party came to an end. It can be said that Jordan used the emotional emphasis feature through the use of “*the most shocking*” and “*amazing*”. Emotional emphasis was used to strengthen the meaning of a sentence (Holmes, 2013). Jordan used this feature to emphasized how shocked she was at Gatsby’s request that actually clear the mystery behind Gatsby’s wealth. It turned out later that Gatsby worked hard to become rich in order to gain Daisy back after they separated because of the war. He even brought a house in West Egg right across Daisy’s house in East Egg.

e. Avoidance of Swear Words

Daisy : “Why did I have to come alone? Are you in love with me?”

Nick : “It’s the secret of Carraway Castle. Tell your chauffeur to go far away.”

Daisy : “Come back in an hour, Freddie!” (Entered the house with Nick) “*Oh! Oh my goodness*. I...I can’t believe it. You---Did you ransack a greenhouse?”

Gatsby asked Nick to arrange the meeting with his former lover, Daisy, at Nick’s house. For the meeting of Gatsby and Daisy at Nick’s house, Gatsby alongside his servants decorated Nick’s living room with plants and flowers. They trimmed the wild grass outside of Nick’s home and even brought some cakes. Daisy arrived moments later at Nick’s house with a car driven by her private chauffeur. She was incredibly shocked at the sight of Nick’s decorated living room. Strong expression of emotion are avoided in what was deemed as the appropriate women’s language (Lakoff, 1975). On this case, avoidance of swear words was used by Daisy to express her strong emotion in a rather polite way. Exclamation such as “*Oh my goodness*” was commonly used to express how shock someone is. Rather than swearing or using stronger word like “Damn”, an upper class woman like Daisy had to choose a more polite way to express her feeling.

f. Intensifiers

Daisy: “Oh Jay! It’s *so* grand.”

Gatsby: “Do you like it?”

Daisy: “I love it...but how do you live here all alone?”

Gatsby: “I don’t. I keep it always full with interesting, celebrated people”

Daisy’s house can be seen from Nick’s window. While looking at the window, Gatsby took the moment to say that Daisy’s house can also be seen from Gatsby’s who located just next door. He then invited Nick and Daisy to take a tour around his house. Daisy was in awe by how beautiful and majestic Gatsby’s house as soon as she saw it from the gate. With such a big building, she wondered how Gatsby can live here by himself. It can be classified that Daisy used intensifier in her utterance. The use of “*so*” was to boost and strengthen one’s opinion about something (Holmes, 2013). On this occasion, Daisy wanted to give an emphasis on how amazed she was upon seeing Gatsby’s mansion.

g. Rising Intonations on Declarative

Jordan : “I know somebody in West Egg.”

Nick : “I don’t know a single person on that side of the bay.”

Jordan : “Oh you must know Gatsby”

Daisy : “Gatsby...*What Gatsby?*”

Nick, Tom, Daisy, and Jordan gathered in the living room. They had a conversation as they drank the cocktail Tom made. One of the topic is the West Egg and the newly rich who lives in that area. As Nick stated that he didn’t know anyone in West Egg, which is the area he currently lived in. Jordan asked whether or not Nick didn’t know the famous Gatsby, who actually lives just right next door to his house. Daisy was shocked upon hearing the name as she remembered about her former lover, Jay Gatsby whom she didn’t meet for the past five years. There is a feature of women’s language where certain intonation was used in the sentence to express doubt (Lakoff, 1975). This feature was used by Daisy upon hearing the name Gatsby. She wondered whether the “Gatsby” that was mentioned by Jordan is the one she knew. Therefore, it can be inferred that Daisy used rising intonations on declaratives in their dialogue here.

Analysis on The Use of Women’s Language Features on The Upper Class Women

Women from the same social class shared many similar aspects that represent their own identities. Language is one of the important part of their identity. Language can be a prominent symbol of a group identity and measurement of acculturation to the mainstream culture (Edwards, 1976). People from a higher social class adhere to the institutionalized norms of proper standard English

(Coates, 2008). That is why women of the upper class society used Lakoff's women's language features frequently in their utterances. It can be seen through the conversation they have with each other or with people outside of their classes.

Conversation is mainly a language of familiarity for many women (Tannen, 1991). It is considered as a way of forming bonds and maintaining relationship. Women with higher socio-economic class such as Daisy, Jordan, and Daisy's mother spoke in the same manner as they were born and lived in the same environment. People from the upper-class of society tend to use words that are considered to be women's language (Lakoff, 1975). They used more women's language in their dialogues as a way to dignified themselves. They also have more opportunities to learn etiquette, receive education, and entering the richer part of society. If they behaved outside of the role and stereotype of the upper class, they will face a consequence of tarnishing their family's name and reputation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The topic of this study is women's language feature by the upper class female characters of The Great Gatsby Movie. The finding shows that women's language features were used by the upper class female characters from this movie: Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Daisy's mother. Features that was present in this study are lexical hedges, empty adjectives, tag question, intensifier, avoidance of swear words, rising intonation on declarative, and emotional emphasis. By looking from the sociological perspective, the upper class women frequently used women's language features in their dialogues. The main reason is to maintain their dignity and position as a highly respectable group.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to convey my biggest gratitude to everyone who have helped and supported me through the process of making this article. Thank you to my parents, sister, friends, my supervisors Dr. Ni Luh Nyoman Seri Malini, S.S, M.Hum and Made Detriasmitta Saientisna, S.S., M.Hum, and also everyone who can't be mentioned one by one for their continuous support.

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